

## **SGI President Ikeda's Nov. 12 Speech Compose a Great Epic Poem**

*SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 24th SGI General Meeting and 28th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Chubu Auditorium in Nagoya, Japan, Nov. 12.*

My warmest welcome to our friends from around the world! And to my friends in Chubu, thank you for all your hard work.

On Nov. 12, 1866, a great lion of a man was born. His name was Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the father of modern China. As if to celebrate his birth, the heavens on that day rained with stars — a meteor shower radiating from the direction of the constellation Leo.

This spectacular cosmic display known as the Leonids occurs only once every 33 years or so. In November 1966, coinciding with the centennial of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's birth, shooting stars were observed at the rate of 40 per second or 150,000 per hour.

This year another significant Leonid shower is predicted. And when do you think it is expected to be concentrated? In the pre-dawn hours of Nov. 18, the day of the Soka Gakkai's founding!

I firmly believe that this demonstrates that the heavenly deities and the entire universe are heartily celebrating our Day of Founding — a day that marks a resounding victory of the people.

### **Consistent dedication is most praiseworthy; halfhearted efforts leave nothing of lasting value.**

Today, we are most honored to have with us First Vice President Wang Chi-Lung of the World Academy of Arts and Culture. An eminent poet, he has brought the inner starlight of the poetic spirit to this meeting. I accept with immense pride and a profound sense of responsibility, together with my fellow members in 128 countries and territories around the world, the great honor of serving as Official Patron of the Academy and of the World Congress of Poets held under its auspices. Dr. Wang, thank you very much.

The World Congress of Poets was started in 1969 as a light of peace to illuminate the darkness of the Cold War. Dr. Wang threw himself into this noble endeavor when he was still in his 20s.

It is encouraging to see so many enthusiastic Soka Gakkai youth in their 20s, too, who are playing a leading role not only in the upcoming Chubu World Peace Youth Culture Festival but in culture festivals around the country. Chubu youth division members, thank you for all your efforts and painstaking preparations. Surpass Tokyo! Outdo Kansai! I pray that the Chubu members will proceed in a way true to Chubu and win a resounding victory.

Since his youth, Dr. Wang has been active in each World Congress of Poets — numbering 18 to date. They have been held in various parts of the globe. Such consistent dedication is most praiseworthy; halfhearted efforts leave nothing of lasting value. His outstanding leadership as steering committee chair four years ago for the 15th Congress in Taipei, the capital of Taiwan, is well-known.

### **The struggle of poetry is to unite all that is good in humanity, to link all that is good and right.**

Buddhism expounds four kinds of evil conduct in speech that lead to negative retribution: lying, flattery, defamation and duplicity. Flattery includes embellishing or misrepresenting the facts out of vanity.

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It is a sad pattern of history and society that people of justice are painted as villains that good people are divided by means of vile, base and malicious words.

The French poet Paul Éluard once declared that poetry is a struggle to bring people together. To unite all that is good in humanity, to link all that is good and right — this is the struggle of poetry.

I assert that Dr. Wang is the epitome of a world poet in action — a poet who works tirelessly for the unity and betterment of humanity through the power of words that are imbued with unsurpassed beauty, nobility and truth.

Incidentally, when we do morning and evening gongyo and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we are reciting a great cosmic poem with a free spirit.

Back in 1969 and 1970, around the time the World Congress of Poets was inaugurated, my noble Chubu friends were assailed by a raging storm of slander, contempt, hatred and envy from the established powers of the day just as described in the Lotus Sutra. At the height of this onslaught, Chubu Leader Kazuo Ono, then Chubu youth division leader, and the other members of this region wept bitter tears of indignation and stood up courageously to fight against gross injustice.

The citadel of Chubu is fortified by strong prayer and powerful action. Indeed, prayer and action have been the driving force behind its bold, magnificent triumph. Congratulations! Chubu has created a beautiful Soka realm. I will never forget the epic achievements of the Chubu women's division members, who have worked wholeheartedly for kosen-rufu in this region. You have made splendid efforts.

### **Showing respect and appreciation for women will always remain a fundamental SGI rule.**

I am reminded of some lines of verse that Dr. Wang, whose pen name is Lu Ti, dedicated to his mother, a woman who lived the final chapter of her life with great dignity. He shares the emotions that went through his mind as he held her lifeless hands in his just after she died: “With these hands you rocked the cradle / With these hands you washed mountains of clothes / With these hands you embraced your nine children / With these hands you led me across the road / With your sparse white hair tied back / So frail the wind could sweep you away / You stand firmly as an immortal statue / In my heart.” This is a famous poem.

Let all of us sincerely cherish the women's division members, the mothers of kosen-rufu.

Buddhism teaches that those who have practiced the essence of the Lotus Sutra are greeted by a thousand Buddhas when they die and flow into a golden river of happiness on their eternal journey of life, savoring profound joy.

I humbly send my prayers to Dr. Wang's mother and all the heroic mothers here in Chubu and throughout the world.

I reconfirm here with all of you that showing the utmost respect and appreciation for the women's division members will always remain a fundamental SGI rule.

### **People of genuine humanity are people of faith and poetic spirit. Poetry is the innate cry of the human spirit.**

In his epic, the *Aeneid*, the ancient Roman poet Virgil warns against giving in to evil, asserting that we must confront it and advance even more boldly.

It is my belief that a true poet stands and fights bravely in the vanguard of the people, fearlessly speaking the truth for all to hear.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: “It is the nature of beasts to threaten the weak and fear the strong. Our contemporary scholars are just like them” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pp. 34–35). The Japanese tend to be subservient and fawning to those

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who have power. Yet, when they see someone weaker than them, they threaten and harass them. Japan is a land of deplorable Animality.

That is why the Daishonin's Buddhism stresses speaking the truth confidently with the heart of a lion king, no matter what criticism or abuse might be heaped on you. There is nothing more wretched than fear — fear is an insult to your dignity.

In the midst of the Atsuhara Persecution, the Daishonin said to Nikko Shonin, his successor: "None of you must be afraid. If you advance with undiminished confidence, right and wrong in this matter will become apparent without fail" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1455).

If we rise to the challenge and vigorously denounce those who perpetrate and abet evil, the negative consequences of their deeds will clearly manifest themselves as the law of cause and effect teaches. Buddhism, after all, is a battle to vanquish evil.

I hope that my Chubu friends will create a history of courageous advance and struggle that will be a model for kosen-rufu everywhere. Let us of the SGI win in all our endeavors through courage! Just laugh off politicians and scholars whose hearts are ruled by Animality!

People of genuine humanity are people of faith and poetic spirit. Poetry is the innate cry of the human spirit. The wail of a newborn baby — that, too, is the voice of humanity, the voice of the heavens, the voice of nature. In such ordinary, spontaneous voices, poetry lives. They are so different from the contrived words of arrogant authorities.

Our movement is dedicated to spreading the genuine voices of humanity.

### **The world is moving toward an age of dialogue.**

Walt Whitman, one of my favorite poets as a youth — actually, I'm still in my youth! — declared that the life of the common people is itself an unrhymed poem. A poem, in other words, that doesn't follow set forms or conventions.

The people's movement of the SGI is a great, dynamic cultural movement. It is creating fresh value while bringing diverse people together in the community and across the globe on a day-to-day basis — through the art of dialogue.

At its General Assembly on Nov. 4, the United Nations proclaimed 2001 as the Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations. This was in response to a proposal submitted by Iran. This is ample evidence that the world is moving toward an age of dialogue.

I have been pursuing dialogue between civilizations on many levels. And the motto of the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, which I established on Feb. 11, 1996, the anniversary of Josei Toda's birth, is "Dialogue of civilizations for world citizenship." I am currently conducting a far-reaching dialogue between civilizations on the subject of Buddhism and Islam with the institute's director, Dr. Majid Tehranian, an Iranian peace scholar.

There is no doubt that the tide of the SGI's grass-roots movement of dialogue and discussion is having a deep and significant impact, directing the popular current toward world peace.

Day by day, we are composing a great epic poem of the people, of the SGI movement. A poem the likes of which the world has never seen. In this epic poem, there is no place for the names of cowardly individuals who have betrayed their faith. To include them is repugnant.

### **'I am here to serve the people' — this is the spirit of a genuine leader.**

When Dr. Sun Yat-sen was elected provisional president of the Republic of China in 1911, he continued to make every effort to meet with the people, in spite of the busy demands of his position. His greatness lies in this desire to meet and talk with the people in

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person.

One day, an old man in his 80s came to visit Dr. Sun, having made a long journey to do so. He was so moved to actually meet the president that he started to bow profusely to him. Dr. Sun immediately put his arm around the man's shoulder and urged him to sit down, saying gently: "As president, I am the servant of the people. I am here to serve all the citizens of our country."

Hearing these words, the old man asked, "How about when you're no longer president?"

Without hesitation, Dr. Sun replied: "I will return to the people. I will live among the masses."

The president courteously saw his guest off, accompanying him to the building entrance, and even arranged to have a car take him to his lodgings.

The old man beamed with joy, and he is later said to have said with deep emotion and appreciation, "Today, I have seen the true essence of democracy."

What a profoundly insightful episode!

"I am here to serve the people" — this is the spirit of a genuine leader. Because we have walked this path, the SGI has grown into a worldwide organization. The most respectable of all are the people. We must ensure that this spirit is never destroyed.

### **The goal of Buddhism is to lead the world to peace and prosperity through the pursuit of justice and truth.**

In his revolutionary struggle, Dr. Sun Yat-sen cried out: "How do we secure a base of support? By winning people's hearts. Once we have won people's hearts, we will possess a lasting base of support that no one can take away from us." These are important words. To win over the people, to capture their hearts — this is how all solid support is forged. I want you to remember this point well.

Because I have put this earnestly into practice, the SGI has developed to the extent that it has. This has not been achieved by formality or organizational strength. This I state unequivocally.

The SGI theme for next year is the Year of Victory in the Community for the New Century. Let us strive together for our fulfillment, for the welfare of our communities and to strengthen the power and influence of the people.

To lead the world in the direction of peace and prosperity through the pursuit of justice and truth — this is the goal of Buddhism. In the Buddhist sutras, the wheel-turning kings are regarded as the ideal leaders for achieving this.

What is the true significance of the wheel-jewel, the wheel-shaped weapon that these kings wield to crush evil? In the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," the Daishonin says the wheel-jewel represents the words and voices of those who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Words based on the Mystic Law that bring courage, inspiration and hope are a fundamental force for crushing evil and creating a realm of peace and happiness. This is the power of the wheel-jewel, the power of our words and voices.

### **The foremost king wins support and respect through the power of character, the power of philosophy and the power of art and culture.**

Foremost among all the wheel-turning kings is the gold-wheel-turning king, whose influence extends in all directions and encompasses the entire world. In contemporary terms, he is a king who doesn't use armed force or hard power, like authority — a ruler who doesn't oppress people. He wins support and respect by means of such soft powers as the power of character, the power of philosophy and the power of art and culture.

The spirit of President Makiguchi's concept of humanitarian competition is the same as

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that of the wheel-turning kings.

The silver-wheel-turning king, too, takes the initiative to visit others' lands. And the gold-wheel-turning king, even if he doesn't go anywhere, is visited by people from throughout the world who yearn to meet him and gather where he lives.

It is a great honor today that we of the SGI are visited by many of the world's finest intellects. We enjoy the great trust and friendship of countless people in all corners of the globe. Such is the wonderful era of the SGI we have now entered. Let us celebrate together.

Today an ever-growing alliance of the people spans the globe under the banner of Soka.

A gold-wheel-turning king is said to appear very rarely. Like a gold-wheel-turning king, let us bathe the earth in the golden light of humanism. Let us vigorously pursue our goal of kosen-rufu.

The theme of this latest World Peace Youth Culture Festival is "Soaring Toward Victory." Let's all promise to soar to victory — on into the 21st century.

I conclude today's speech with my prayers for the eternal prosperity of the World Academy of Arts and Culture and the World Congress of Poets. Thank you.

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